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PATTERNS IN MATERNAL MORTALITY RELATED TO INDUCED ABORTION IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1963-1987

by

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ABSTRACT

Trends in maternal mortality for deaths related to complications of abortion and deaths from all other obstetric causes are examined for the 25-year period 1963-1987. Five-year maternal mortality ratios were computed as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. From 1968-72 to 1973-77, the maternal mortality ratio for deaths due to abortion declined 84.8 percent (6.6 to 1.0 per 100,000). The decrease in mortality from abortion complications accounted for 45.9 percent of the decline in overall maternal mortality in the state during this period. During 1978-82, the maternal mortality ratio for abortion declined to less than one death per 100,000 births, with no abortion-related deaths occurring during 1983-87. After 1977, the maternal mortality ratio for all other obstetric causes appeared to level off at about eight per 100,000.

Examination of the trends in abortion-related deaths by individual year revealed a sudden decline in the number of such deaths in 1973, dropping from an average of about five per year during 1963-1972 to less than 0.5 per year thereafter. The decline in abortion-related deaths in 1973 coincided with the legalization of elective abortion and the provision of funding support for abortion services for Medicaid and AFDC recipients in the state.